

MY BOOK

by Mick Youther

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INTRODUCTION

Modern man (*Homo sapiens*) is probably the only species aware of its own mortality. Even children know that people get old and die. It is not something you think about much when you're young, but as you get older, it is only natural to think about it more often. I was reminded of it in 2010, when I was diagnosed with cancer. I was fortunate that the cancer was found in time. It was removed and has not recurred, but it was a not-so-subtle reminder that I was not immortal.

Then came the pandemic, reminding everyone--not just the elderly, that they could die. We all heard the horrifying stories of people falling ill, be taken to the hospital, and dying--having never seen their families again. In worse cases, whole families died within a week or two of becoming infected. Hospitals were overflowing and bodies were stacking up outside in refrigerated trucks.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not obsessing about death. I am reflecting on life—looking back on the people I've known and the things I've seen and done and learned during my seventy-five years on earth--but that's in the past. I am thinking now of the future and I what I want to do with the rest of my life; whether it be years, months or days.

No matter what I decide to do in the future, it always comes down to the same thing--what to do right now. It is the same question that everyone faces repeatedly. A human being's life is made up of one decision after another, and that is one of the things that make us human. We have the ability to choose our behavior, rather than operating on instinct as other animals do to varying degrees. Some choices are easy: “I think I'll go to work today to earn money to maintain my current standard of living;” or “I think I'll turn here because it is the best way to get where I am going.” Not all decisions are that simple. Choices range from “no-brainers” to “damned if you do and damned if you don't”.

When you're young and make a bad decision, you may have time to correct it. But when you're old, every decision could be your last; so I must think carefully about what I really want to do. I never had a “bucket list”, but if I did, about the only thing left on it would be “write a book”. So, that is what I'm doing. I've written enough over the years to know that **this** book had to be non-fiction. I'm sure I could write a fiction novel--if I lived long enough, but a half-finished fiction novel is of little use to anyone; whereas a half-finished non-fiction book may still have some informational value to someone.

I have enough ideas for ten books, but I don't have time to write 10 books. (Did I mention I was seventy-five?) I've had a couple of kinds of cancer, my organ systems are competing to see which one is going to fail first, and I am the world's slowest writer. So, I'm pretty sure this is going to be my first, last and only book—unless I live to be 105, in which case, be on the lookout for my second book, *How to Live to be 105*.

Since this book is my only book, it is necessarily a hodge-podge of things I want to record in a book. The first and most important part is about my family. I had always hoped that Doris Kearns Goodwin would do one of her wonderful biographies on our family, but that doesn't look very promising. I contacted her office in the Spring of '22, but never heard back from her; so I guess it is up to me. That's okay. I've always been a die-hard Do-it-Yourselfer (DIY), and it's probably best

I write this book myself anyway. I'm sure Goodwin would write a great story of my family's history, but there are family stories that have never been written down anywhere--until now.

They are my family's stories I heard growing up; and except for my brother and maybe a cousin or two, no one knows any of these stories. I don't know if anybody else cares about them or not. I'm not trying to sell books. This is more a labor of love.

Modern families are smaller and more scattered than ever, making it more likely a the family's collective oral history will be lost. I have had a wonderful life because of my family—past, present and future, and I want to leave a record of it, because that is what humans do.

If you continue reading, you will soon discover that I have published this book long before it was finished. In truth, this Introduction may be the only part that is finished-finished. All the other parts are not finished, not edited or both; and some parts are not much more than ideas for the next edition. That is why I know this book will never be “finished” to my satisfaction, so I'll just keep writing and updating it for as long as I can write.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF CONTENTS **[not necessarily in this order]**

INTRODUCTION

THE YOUTHER FAMILY CHRONICLES

History

Stories—with contributions from friends and family.

MEMOIRS about

Williams Camp

Glory Days

Being All That I Can Be

If You Build It, They Will Come

Immortal Words

ESSAYS

QUOTATIONS—Love quotes

APPENDIX

FAMILY

THE YOUTHER FAMILY CHRONICLES

My wife, Barbara, has been researching her ancestry for more than 20 years and has constructed a well-documented family tree made up of around 1800 people; with some Irish lineages going back to ca. 700 A.D.. I could never get too excited about tracing my family roots because whenever I tried, I could not even find my great-grandfather's family in the 1880 census records. That makes for a stunted family tree.

Then, about ~~six~~ ~~seven~~ eight years ago, my son-in law, Jaleel, took up the challenge. He was already interested in genealogy, but could not trace his own family tree in India because of poor record keeping. It didn't take Jaleel long to discover that my great-grandfather's name had been transcribed incorrectly from the 1880 Census records, spelling his last as “Fother”—instead of “Yother”. Once he cleared that hurdle, Jaleel was off and running. Now, I have a family tree boasting over 2200 individuals; and whenever I want to know something about my ancestry, I can ask Jaleel.

In the course of their research, both Barbara and Jaleel have relied on family stories at various times in their searches and know how important they can be. One of the main purposes of this book is to record and pass along all the family stories and history I can gather or remember before they are forgotten and lost forever.

Our family surname, Youther, was changed from Yother, which came from the surname, Yoder--an Americanization of the Swiss name, Joder, which was believed to come from the abbreviated form of the name a missionary monk, St. Theodore, who brought Christianity to Switzerland in the fourth century AD. [By the way, both names are pronounced the same—Yother, with a long O. You wouldn't believe some of the tortured pronunciations that I have heard because of that little “u”.]

I doubt my Granddad Youther knew about the Swiss origin of his family name. He always claimed to be Pennsylvania-Dutch; but my mom said that was because our name sounded German, and Germans weren't always popular in the USA during the first half of the twentieth century.

I grew up believing that my great grandmother, Sephronia Allifax [Mueller], had changed the family name from Yother to Youther because she thought it looked prettier with the [u] in it. So, naturally, I thought we were the only branch of the family with the name Youther. Then my brother met someone who said, “Hey, you're one of the Georgia Yothers, aren't you?”

The guy's name was Chris Yoder, and he was the editor of [*The Yoder Newsletter*](#) which has been researching and documenting the history of the Joder family since 1983. If you have any connection to this family—check it out. They also have a [Facebook page](#).

[*The Yoder Newsletter*](#) had been tracing the descendants of Conrad Yoder since 1983, but they had never been able to pin down the connection between the Yoders of North Carolina and the Yothers of Georgia and Tennessee. They believed that one of Conrad Yoder's sons moved to Georgia, but they did not know which son it was. That is no longer true. Thanks to Jaleel, we believe we understand the connections, and I will include more genealogic findings in a future edition.

[**insert genealogical information]

It soon became apparent that our family was not the only Youther line spelled with a [u]—not even close. Judging from what I read in *The Yoder Newsletter* and on various ancestry websites, you couldn't swing a dead cat in northern Georgia or southern Tennessee without hitting a Yother or a Youther. Grandad Youther always told us that everybody in Tennessee with red hair and green eyes was related to us. (Maybe he is correct, but I have been unable to confirm this.)

FAMILY STORIES

THE GRANDPARENTS

I was fortunate to know all my grandparents. We lived near them, so I saw and interacted with them regularly until I left for college.

[**Author's note:** *Except when noted, these family stories are straight out of my deteriorating memory with little or no corroboration.*]

Grandad Youther

Martin Lee Youther, 1903-1965, went by his middle name, Lee. He was not tall—five foot eighth or nine. He always wore a hat—fedora-style, felt or straw—depending on the season (and I'll bet he changed hats on the prescribed day). He was born and grew up in southern Tennessee. He said you could see Lookout Mountain from where he lived as a child, so it must have been somewhere southeast of Chattanooga, TN.

When he was just a toddler, Lee went to the store with his mom, who must have carried him part of the way. When they got to the general store, a tin-whistle caught Lee's eye, and he begged his mom to buy it for him. He kept on until his mom agreed to buy him the tin whistle, or the condition that Lee would walk all the way home on his own two feet. Lee's tin whistle broke before he got home on the longest walk of his life.

Lee's father died at the age of 31. The cause is unknown so far. [[[add story of stranger coming to Ephraim's home.]] [See what Jaleel has on it]

I was aware of a story about Grandad Youther going back down to Tennessee to visit relatives and coming back mad because he did not like the welcome he received (from who, I don't know). Not long ago, Jaleel's genealogical research found that he had gone back to Tennessee in 1943 to get an affidavit signed attesting to his identity so he could get a “delayed” birth certificate from the state. I do not know why he needed a birth certificate at that time.

When he was old enough, Lee began working in a coal mine until a friend of his was killed in the mine. He quit and never went down in a mine again. He went out west and worked in an open-pit copper mine (in Arizona ??) before getting hired by the Carter Oil Co. in Oklahoma. He was supposedly hired because he was a good baseball pitcher, and they wanted him on the Carter Oil Company baseball team.

He married Mary Elizabeth Atkins ???date. They had two children: William Robert (Billy Bob) and Lois ???. Billy once climbed up on a drilling rig and froze. Granddad Youther had to climb up and carry him down.

My earliest memory of Granddad Youther was in his garden with him pitching over-ripe tomatoes to me, and me batting them with a stick. It was a forerunner of the Gallagher show. When I was a little older, he would let me sit in his lap and steer his car around on our country roads. He took

my brother and I fishing, and after a long hard day fishing, there was nothing we liked to better than stopping off at The Blue Moon tavern for a cold one. The Blue Moon was strategically situated on U.S. highway 40, just outside of “dry” Fayette Co.. [I don’t believe this is still true.]

We were fishing over at Lake Sara in Effingham Co. when Granddad Youther hooked a monster. He fought it, his rod bending double as he pulled back, then he let off tension--cranking rapidly, slowly bringing his catch closer to the bank. It made several powerful runs in one direction and then back the other way, until it stopped. He pulled as hard as he could without breaking his fishing line. He figured the fish had gone under a submerged log or something. He waved me closer, telling me to hold his fishing rod, and before I knew it, he had stripped off his shoes, pants and shirt and waded into the lake in his boxer shorts. He followed the line out to a spot about 40 feet from shore where the water was just over waist deep. He took a breath, dunked down into the water and came back up, pulling his catch up far enough that he could see it. It was a huge snapping turtle. As he looked at his surprise catch, the turtle opened its mouth and the hook came free. The turtle rolled over and disappeared in the murky water. Gd Youther tried not to swear around us (the children), but he made an exception in this case.

The only other time I recall Gd Youther losing it was when one of the bird dogs got under his car. The bird dogs were always raring to go hunting, so normally, all you had to do was let them out of their pen and open the trunk of your car and they would jump in—but this was a young dog who must not have gotten the memo on proper boarding of the vehicle. Instead of jumping into the trunk, the dog decided to play a little “catch me if you can” around and under the car with Gd Youther. I learned a couple of new words that day.

The training of the dogs was a mystery to me. When we moved out to Camp, we had these two short-haired German Pointers. One liver spot and one lemon spot. They were well-trained hunting dogs. I assume Gd Youther trained them. He was the hunter, but all he hunted was quail. He didn’t shoot doves because they were the bird of peace. I think he went up north a few times to hunt pheasants. I remember seeing some in the freezer at Aunt Lois’ house. I remember them distinctly because they still had their colorful feathered heads attached to their bodies. [due to some hunting regulation.]

Granddad Youther was one of the coaches of the William's Camp baseball team and my private pitching coach. He also had a lot to do with restoring the field to playing condition.

Granddad Stark

Michael Boyd Stark was born around Jonesboro, Texas on 11/05/1894. As a young man, he went by his middle name--Boyd, but I remember him being referred to as M.B. by some oil field workers. To me, he was just Granddad Stark, but I was aware that he had not always been the gentle, soft-spoken man that I knew.

As a young man, there was nothing Boyd Stark liked better than fighting--bare knuckle, wrestling, brawling, kicking, biting, etc.... His mother did not approve of his fighting and strictly forbid it—**except** when somebody else started the fight; so Boyd perfected the art of being forced into fights.

He would go down to the pool room decked out in white shirt, bow-tie Derby and spats--looking like a real Dandy. This, of course, would elicit some sort of derisive comment from one of the local ruffians, and Boyd would be forced to defend his honor with his fists.

Granddad Stark never advocated fighting to us, my brother and I, but he did give us some advice—just in case we ever found ourselves in a fighting situation. If there is going to be a fight, Granddad Stark advised us to get in the first punch and aim for the nose, if possible. That will give you a great advantage in the fight.

He had a couple of enlarged knuckles on one hand. He had broken them striking someone's forehead—something he advised you should try to avoid. He was missing the tip digit on one index finger and about half of one of his ring fingers. His other index finger had been crushed by a piece of oil field equipment, and he couldn't bend it at all.

I've forgotten any details of his fight stories except my favorite—a story I dramatized for a writing assignment in a fiction writing class. By dramatized, I mean I made up the beginning and the end, but the fight was just as my granddad described it. The story: *The Fighter* will be found in the Appendix (once I have found it).

It wasn't like Granddad Stark was always bragging about being a great fighter.. We usually had to coax his stories from him. We got more information from Mom about his exploits than from him.

At one time in his story, Boyd Stark was pistol-packing lawman in the wild west (if you mean Seminole, OK in the 20-30s??? Mom said he was only made a special deputy so he could carry his pistol in town, tucked in his waistband at the small of his back.

He was a dead-eye shot with a pistol. He could shoot a runnig rabbit from a moving car—something he did at every opportunity. He was also an excellent shot with a bow and arrow. He did not brag about that either. Most of the stories of his marksmanship came from Mom. He did tell me a story about spotting a flock of ducks on a pond. He had a single-shot shotgun and his pistol with him, so he crawled through the grass and brush near the shore until he got into position to line up as many ducks as possible with his shotgun. He shot and killed five ducks with the shotgun and killed three more with his pistol as the ducks took flight. No, it wasn't sporting. It was food.

He (and some of his brothers, I assume) hunted and fished to supply meat for the family. To be fair, maybe his sisters hunted too--I don't know. I do know they ate all kinds of things: squirrels, possums, game birds, crows, pigeons, ground hogs, raccoons, mussels, froglegs, fish of all kinds, etc.... They would catch big catfish by what they called "hogging, or pulling them out of holes back under the river banks. Supposedly, the brother who was normally held by the legs and pushed into the holes under the river banks, felt something in under the river bank that scared him enough that he refused to do it any longer.

I never got a good idea of how poor or well-off the family was financially. I know they picked cotton at one time. I don't know if it was their crop or they picked cotton for other people.

Before he was hired by Carter Oil, Granddad Stark did a lot of different things to make ends meet. He did some art and drafting work and some taxidermy. I remember the mounted raccoon on the top of Grandma's piano. It was just one of the fascinating things there were to see in their house.

Granddad Stark had various knots, bumps, lumps and scars he had accumulated over the years from various fights and accidents. Once he and his brothers were shooting roman candles at each other. Boyd's roman candle died, and he was running from a brother who was shooting at him. He ended up running into a fence and somehow breaking both collar-bones. He was put into bed with two sisters that had scarlet fever (or some disease like that).

On another occasion, Boyd was riding a mule as fast as he could go, when he came up on a new fence that someone had just put up. The mule stopped suddenly and Boyd flew over the mule's head. Breaking both of his thumbs that the reins had been wrapped around.

One of the sad things about my Granddad Stark was his eye problems. At one time he had what they thought was a skin cancer on the side of his face near his temple. They treated it with X-rays, which was the latest medical miracle. They were blasting people with X-Rays for all kinds of ailments (before they realized the dangers). As a result of those treatments, he developed cataracts in both eyes and he could not see anything clearly during all the time I knew him.

He eventually had the cataract surgery of the day(early 1960s?)—which removed the clouded lenses and replaced them with thick glasses that looked like Coke bottle bottoms. At that time, cataract surgery was a big deal. I remember Granddad being in the hospital down in Centralia recuperating from the surgery. He did stop smoking during his convalescence, so that was a benefit; but I don't know if he was ever really satisfied with the results of the cataract surgery.

Granddad Stark's woodland lore on mushroom hunting: Look around Ash trees, and start looking when the leaves on oak trees are the size of a squirrel's ear.

One of my favorite stories was when Boyd's father, Thomas Stark, was going to return to Missouri from Jonesboro, Texas to reclaim some land that had been stolen from him by a crooked relative, who was at one time the Governor of Missouri. [I checked, and there was a Gov. Stark in the history of Missouri. I will see if I can find out anything else about this]

On the day he was to leave, Thomas saddled up his mule and loaded his gear. All the kids crowded around him, crying and begging him not to go. He gave everybody a hug and a kiss, said goodbye, mounted up and started down the road. The smaller kids followed him down the road wailing and pleading with him to come back. Before he was a quarter mile down the road--Thomas stopped, turned around and returned home, saying, "To Hell with it!"

I suspect that was a wise decision on Thomas' part.

One of the earliest stories I know was about Indians killing one of the Boyd family around Comanche, Texas. Some of the family were away from home when they set upon by a large group of indians. They were riding for their lives when one rider's horse slipped on a rock, went down, and the rider was killed by the Indians. Supposedly, you could see the mark the horse's shoe made as it skidded across the rock for years after. They named the place after the mark on the rock, but I don't remember what it was called—if I ever knew (Blazed Rock or something like that). I don't know how long ago this event took place, but it was probably long before my grandfather's day.

[If anyone has any information about this tale, please email me at myouthur@gmail.com.]

MY PARENTS

I couldn't have had nicer parents. Mom was the Cub Scout den mother, and Dad was the Little League coach. They had completely different personalities. Dad was gregarious and seemed to know everybody. Mom was reserved and did not make friends easily.

They loved animals. At one point in time, they had twenty-some horses, twenty-some dogs, a cow, a bull, and few cats. I always joked about them having a vet on retainer. The vet did come out to their place to vaccinate dogs and gave them a bulk discount because they were the unofficial no-kill rescue shelter in the area. "You want to get rid of a dog? Dump it near the Youther place. They'll take care of it."

They were both artists. Together they made wallets, belts and watch bands for about half the Exxon workers in the Loudon field. Dad tooled designs on the leather, and Mom did the lacing and dye work. They made a couple of leather wall hangings, one of which I still have, but it is in poor condition. Besides that leather picture, I still have the shotgun they gave me one Christmas. Mom had woodburned a pheasant in flight on one side of the stock and some ducks rising off a pond on the other side. [[[add pic]]]Those are the only objects of art I have that they made. That is what happens to things. They disappear. Word can last longer than things.

Mom once made a 2'x3' wall plaque, adorned with arrowheads she had fashioned from clay and painted various natural shades. It would not fool an archaeologist, but it looked beautiful. She painted a selection of common birds on poster board that we used in a Cub Scout demonstration. She tooled a sheet of brass into an Aztec Sun calendar about a foot and a half in diameter.

Dad painted a number of nature or hunting scenes, using oil paints on glass.

Writing these stories, questions come to mind, like did Boyd Stark have his pistol tucked into his waistband at the small of his back when he shook hands with Pretty Boy Floyd? Inquiring minds want to know. But there is nobody to ask. So, write down your family stories. Talk to your older relatives. Ask them questions and write their stories down. The sooner—the better.

GUEST CONTRIBUTIONS

This where you come in.

Relate any stories you can remember. It doesn't matter if someone else tells the same story. That might prove interesting.

Letters, photographs, writings—anything related to our extended family.

Messages to future generations.

Everything fit to print about the family.

~~AUTOBIOGRAPHY~~
MEMOIRS

After starting to outline an autobiography, I began to understand why Justin Beiber and Miley Cyrus opted to write their autobiographies when they were in their teens, when it was still a short story. My story is more drawn out, like an Icelandic Saga (but with a happier ending).

My unfinished autobiography can be found at the end of the book, but I wouldn't recommend reading it unless you are friend or family--or a glutton for punishment. It is not finished because I am still living. I'm dying to see how it comes out, but I'm in no hurry.

[Author's note: In these recollections, I have abbreviated some names, but used full names in other cases in a completely arbitrary manner. If anyone objects to their full name being given; let me know and I will abbreviate it. By the same token, if anyone feels slighted by their name being abbreviated; let me know and include their full name for posterity. If there is anyone who objects to any part of their name or initials being used; let me know and I will refer to them with a pseudonym—like Seymour Butts or something like that.

WILLIAMS CAMP

I like to say that I grew up in a little part of Oklahoma. It just happened that my little part of Oklahoma was in South Central Illinois. At the time we moved to Williams Camp, almost every family there were first or second generation Oklahomans that had been transferred here during the oil boom of the late 1930's. By the 1940's, the Loudon oil field was said to be the second largest oil producer after Texas. For more information on the [Loudon oil Field](#).

There were three Carter Oil camps in the area: the William's Camp, the Fortner Camp and the Altamont Camp. They were created by the Carter Oil Company because there was not enough housing for all the new oil field workers moving into the area in the late '30's and early '40's.

Our community was listed as Pruitt on old Illinois state maps [to be in Appendix]. It was named after its first Postmaster, but it was known to everyone as Williams Camp because Carter Oil had leased the land from a man named Williams. The camp was situated on a 10 acre square of land holding approximately 40 homes with ??? people. Camp had its own little store/gas station, and had once had a post office, but I don't think that was still operating when we moved there (ca. 1952-3).

There were all kinds of houses in the Camp. I believe some of them were Sears houses. Our house was a shot-gun style house with a rounded roof—like a quonset hut. There was a large grape arbor and an old garage when we moved there. Dad had a new garage built that he connected to the house via a breeze-way and finished one side of it into a bedroom for my brother and me.

I'm sure my folks liked moving to Camp because Carter Oil employees and their families were provided with free water, sewer and natural gas at that time. These perks slowly disappeared over the years as Carter Oil was swallowed up by Humble Oil, which was then acquired by Exxon—until it was just another big corporation that cared only for making profits and little about its employees. The oil field workers were not unionized, but had an Employee Federation that bargained for them. Dad was an elected Federation representative off and on for I don't know how many years.

William's Camp had its own school house located just west of the Camp—just a half a block from our house.. It was not part of the Camp. It was owned by the school district, but the camp residents had some say about how it was built. The Williams Camp schoolhouse was the only country schoolhouse built of brick in the district because the Okies were acutely aware of tornadoes. Besides having a brick school house, Camp had two or three community tornado shelters with two foot thick concrete walls sunk half-way into the ground. If it weren't for the wooden doors, you would think they were built to withstand an atomic blast near ground-zero. [[[more on this]]] I spent many hours playing playing on and around one of those community storm shelters, sometimes while neighbors visited and watched the skies for funnel clouds.

I remember when I was in either the first or second grade, the Camp school had 28 students distributed through grades 1-6. The class ahead of mine had only one student, so some of our class would participate in some of his sessions with the teacher. There was no kindergarden then, so I started first grade when I was 5 years old. I was always the youngest person in my class. I have yet to find any advantage to starting school early. You can quote me on that.

I loved going to school there. It had big swings, a merry-go-round and a couple of see-saws/teeter-totters. There was a marshy spot where we could catch crawdads in season, and there was a covered set of bleacher by an overgrown ball field left from an earlier time when Carter Oil had its own baseball team. I don't believe we were allowed to climb around on the bleachers during school hours.

My first teacher was Mrs. Beatrice Owens. I adored her, even though she had my parent's standing permission to paddle me whenever she felt it was necessary. When I graduated from high school, Mrs. Owens gave me a present, even though I had not seen her for years. She was a nice lady.

Bill R. fell out of one of the poplar trees near the road and broke his arm after school while waiting for the bus..

The school house had big multi-paned windows on its south side. One year, a hailstorm broke them all out and damaged the flat roof. The students were bused into Brownstown schools for a short time while repairs were made.

Much to my dismay, Mrs. Owens retired, and Mrs. Marek became the new teacher at the Williams Camp School for my 3rd grade year. She was okay, but she was no Mrs. Owens.

The school district was phasing out the country school houses scattered around the area, so I only attended the Williams Camp school through the third grade and started the fourth grade in Brownstown (a metropolis of 650 people).

The last of the country schoolhouses were closed in 19???, so I started riding the bus into Brownstowns to start the 4th grade.

Mrs. Marek was my teacher again for the 4th grade.

Allan D. and I had permanent desk positions—one on each side of Mrs. Marek's desk, so she could reach us—when necessary.

Teacher list: see Appendix

I always did well in school without too much effort—though my folks did have to sit me down and force me to learn my multiplication tables, and I have to admit, they have come in handy on occasion. I had a friend in college that had never learned his multiplication tables. He was an English major and had developed his own system somehow based on twos and threes (don't ask me how it worked). Then came the pocket calculator--problem solved.

Around 19????, the lease on which Williams Camp was located expired and everybody had to move. I didn't know any kind of details about how long we had to leave, but there was a mass exodus over a year or two. A number of houses were moved, which proved to be an interesting thing to watch. A camp resident, Junior Williams, bought several of the houses and started his own little housing project on the north side of Brownstown.

Rather than moving into town, my folks bought the Schoolhouse where we had gone to school for three years. When the Camp school closed, it had been purchased by a retired Carter Oil employee and remodeled into a home.

[Insert map/diagram of camp.]

Would you believe I don't have one single picture from Williams Camp.

The Camp was a huge playground—crisscrossed by neighborhood streets and sidewalks. We could go anywhere on the south side because that was where most of the kids lived. They must have started Camp on the north side because many of the people were older or retired. We knew to stay out of their yards because they knew our parents and they knew where we lived.

Fortner Camp was 10-12 miles northeast of William's Camp. My grandparents Stark lived just outside of that camp in an old farmhouse, having moved there from Beecher City, IL. They had a functioning outhouse complete with Sears catalogs to complement their indoor bathroom. A row of big old maple trees lined the west side of the house until a tornado blew down every one of them down and left the house untouched. The only trees standing in their yard after the tornado was a dead tree and a peach tree.

We were at their farmhouse once, having a picnic lunch on a table out in their yard, when a dust storm came up so fast that we all had to run into the house while our picnic supplies and fixings were scattered across the yard. I don't know how widespread the storm was, but as far as I know, this was the only "dust" storm we ever had in that area. I don't know where the dust originated, but it was red and gritty with sand. Maybe it was a little Oklahoma dust blowing into my little part of Oklahoma.

Glory Days--Baseball

Being All That I Can Be--Army

If You Build It, They Will Come—building the house

Immortal Words

THINGS MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME

The value of money. It is not as much as you think. My life goal is to be happy—not rich or famous. My dad worked in the oil fields for ca. 40 years. He liked his job and refused promotions that would have increased his hours and responsibilities along with his pay. He also passed on a big payday when Exxon was recruiting workers to go to Iran for a three year hitch to set up new oil fields—and again when he passed on a similar offer to go to Venezuela.

Honesty. I am honest. I don't mean honest as in obeying the laws and regulations imposed on us by our government. I mean honest—as in telling the truth. I don't lie. Oh, I can lie, and I have lied. I told a couple of lies when I was in the Army. I don't remember specifically what it was I lied about. It was nothing of importance—something like “I don't know” when I did know, or “I didn't see it” when I did see it. For some mysterious reason, the military insisted on treating everyone as if they were a liar, so I became one.

When I was nine or ten, our family went to a Cub Scout Troop meeting at the elementary school building in Brownstown. While the adults were conducting some kind of business in the cafeteria, I and a few other boys thought it would be a good idea to “soap” all the mirrors in the boys' restroom.

This was soon discovered and everyone was called into the main room. The Troop Leader described what had happened in the boys' restroom and called on the guilty parties to raise their hands and admit their involvement, reminding us of our Scout's Honor. There was a hush. A few trembling hands began to raise; and just like that my hand was the only one that remained up. Needless to say, it was a humiliating experience. I had to clean all the mirrors by myself, but I didn't rat out anybody. My folks later told me that they were proud of me for telling the truth. Dad thought a liar was about the worst thing you could be. Mom would joke that I didn't lie--because I was so bad at it. I am bad at it, and I haven't gotten any better with age.

Fast-forward sixty-five years or so, and I still can't lie worth a darn. I bought a new riding mower last year, and the first thing I did was hook the battery up backwards and blow something in the ignition system. It was dead. I had killed my brand new mower. So, I looked up where the nearest authorized service center was for my new mower. In order to avoid the humiliation of having to admit I had hooked the battery up backwards (Real men don't do stupid stuff like that), I decided I would hook the battery up correctly and play dumb. ...”I got the mower. It's dead. I can't get it to do anything. What could be wrong?”

That was the plan anyway, but after stewing over it for a couple of days and having a mild panic attack, I gave up on the idea of lying. I admitted my error. That simplified repairs. I found a good place to take my mower if necessary, and they set up my deck properly---so I was rewarded for telling the truth in this case.

So, the moral is--always tell the truth. It is easier to remember.

Manners

OTHER THINGS I HAVE LEARNED

No matter how old you are, you can still improve yourself.

You will never understand everything, so don't even try.

The nation is fragmented. There was a time when everyone watched the same news.

Now we have groups of people who live in their own little bubble of misinformation and lies.

When you see a big ad touting "Up to 50% off"-- you are not going to get 50% off on whatever it is that you want.

Everybody is weird—in their own way.

You can't do everything.

One thing guaranteed is that things are going to change. Whether you change or not is up to you.

So, get up! and do the best you can do that day. You can't do any better than that. It is not just a cliché to say 'tomorrow is another day'

You can calm a situation, or make it worse with just a word or two.

Too many people can name America's Idol, but don't know who their U.S. Representative.

No, poor people are not a bunch of lazy bums living large on government handouts. They are you-- if things had gone differently in your life.

Republicans want to privatize everything. This will allow the rich to buy and control everything. They will allow us to exist and work for them as long as we pay our taxes and keep our mouths shut.

My writer friend, Lonna, recently posted a tax rate table back to 195??? when rates went as high as 91???%

Back then rich folks avoided paying income tax by //putting would-be profits back into the business. Then rather paying taxes on that money they are improving their companies, hiring more people, paying better salaries// using their profits to buy equipment, expansion and increasing.

Nowdays, even though their income tax rate has been reduced 700%, they still are not satisfied.

Fortunately for them, they and their politicians write the tax laws and keep finding new ways to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

We are treating earth like we can climb aboard a giant starship, kick it into warp drive and go to another earth-like planet to live happily ever after. The problem with this plan is that we do not have a giant starship or a warp drive or a inhabitable planet that we can get to.

We had better start doing what we need to do to keep earth habitable for human beings (also known as earthlings).

I have been blessed my whole life. Loving, nurturing parents; good wife; healthy children and exceptional grandchildren--Still pretty healthy at 73.74, 75--despite making innumerable bad decisions along the way.

I've always considered my ??? in life to be like Forrest Gump. There is an aura of serendipity about the whole thing. ...and that is true for everybody. The question of how to deal with things.

ADVICE

Don't start smoking tobacco.

If you use tobacco—stop.

Try to look on the positive side of things. [Old story illustrating good and bad are relative.]

Do not plant a Sweetgum tree in your yard—unless you are in need of a lot of sweetgum balls for some reason.

Do not plant a Persimmon tree where the fruits will fall on your driveway (duh).

ESSAYS

I want to see if I can write about something other than the high crimes and misdemeanors of George W. Bush's administration.

TBA

FLIGHTS OF FANCY AND OTHER DELUSIONS

I will no longer be available for weddings, funerals, galas, ground-breakings or personal appearances of any kind. I have begun the transition from the physical/corporal plane to my place in the Metaverse. During this time, I will be a recluse—like Howard Huges, except for the billions of dollars and wearing Kleenex boxes on his feet.

IMMORTAL WORDS

???

I have been writing for a long time. I wrote my first play in the second grade--a highly derivative re-telling of the Lincoln assassination at Ford's Theater. We performed the play one evening at a school function (I played John Wilkes Booth). The play folded after one night. I don't know if it was the writing or acting.

Over the years I took short story and magazine writing classes in college and I have lost count of how many "How to Write" books I have read – but I'd be willing to bet that I have read more "how to write" books than Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens put together.

What I learned from all that reading is, "If you want to be a writer—write, don't read about writing." I never wrote enough. I finished a few short stories and poems in my classes. I queried a couple of magazines, barely started a few novels and a couple of screenplays. I don't recall ever finished anything that wasn't due for a class deadline.

In my defense: I was working full-time: married with two kids; building a house and coaching a Little League team. I didn't have enough time to do all the things I needed to do—let alone writing a book.

Eventually, we got into the house, the kids started doing their own things, and I had more time for writing. Even with more time, I did not have the patience to write a novel because I write too slowly. So, I decided I would try writing a newspaper column. I love quotes—especially famous quotes. They're famous because lots of people like them; so I proposed to do a weekly column called Immortal Words, featuring famous quotes about a given subject or by a particular person.

That is not what happened.

George W. Bush had come into office in 2001 wanting to be a "War President" and considered September 11, 2001 to be his lucky day.

"One of the keys to being seen as a great leader is to be seen as commander in chief. My father had all this political capital built up when he drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait and he wasted it. If I have a chance to invade, if I had that much capital, I'm not going to waste it."
--not-yet President, George W. Bush, 1999

On October 7th, less than a month later, American military forces invaded Afghanistan on the pretext of capturing Osama Bin Laden—and so began the longest war in American history. If that weren't bad enough, the dust hadn't even settled from bombing Afghanistan before the Bush Administration was working 24/7 to drum up support for an invasion of Iraq (a nation with no connection to the attacks of 9/11).

That was enough for me.

I was drafted in 1970 during the Vietnam War, but was never ordered to Vietnam. Not everyone was so lucky. Over 58,000 Americans (mostly young men) were killed in the Vietnam War—and for what? Lies... and more lies. The American people were told that if we didn't stop the godless

communists in Vietnam, the rest of the nations of southeast Asia would “fall like dominoes” to the Red Menace. (Spoiler alert: We lost; we left; the dominoes didn't fall and Vietnam is now a favored trading partner with the USA.)

After that humiliating defeat in Vietnam, I didn't think the USA would ever make a mistake like that again--but that was then. Now, I don't even believe Vietnam was a “mistake”. There is a lot of money to be made in wars—if you know the right people, and the Bush/Cheney administration was made up of all the right people. That is why they deliberately drew the USA into a war in Iraq with lie after lie about non-existent weapons of mass destruction (WMDs); and you wouldn't believe the grandiose plans they had to seize control of the oil-rich regions of the Mideast through a series of wars. (see AEI plan)xxx

That was when Immortal Words changed from an light-hearted entertainment column into a weekly protest statement exposing the lies and corruption of the Bush Administration. I didn't know if it would do any good, but I could not sit silently while Bush and his merry band of Chickenhawks pushed lie after lie about Iraq and its WMDs. I had no inside information, but readily available information made it clear that they were lying to build support for their war on Iraq.

Immortal Words first appeared in Carbondale's Nightlife sometime in 2003, thanks to editor, Chris Wissmann. Chris gave me a column space in Nightlife, made me a better writer, and let me write Immortal Words for as long as I could stand it.

Immortal Words was an opinion column, and it was biased because I am biased. Isn't everyone a little biased about something or other? I am biased about a lot of things. I am biased in favor of truth and justice. I am biased against lies and arrogance, greed and corruption, wars and warmongers—all the things that epitomized George W. Bush's administration.

I wish everybody would read some of these columns. This is American history. This is your government in action—doing things that blatantly ignore our Constitution and go against everything the USA once stood for. If you don't read anything else, read The Bush Legacy for a summation of the Bush administration's high crimes and misdemeanors:

It has been over a decade since I stopped writing the Immortal Words column, but I still stand behind every statement I made about George W. Bush and his administration. If you disagree, feel free to contact me at myoutherr@gmail.com. We can discuss it. I just ask that you have some kind of verifiable information that refutes what I said, and not just an opinion with nothing to back it up.

[**Author note:** You may notice variations in formatting, and many of the links may no longer be valid. I am working on those details and should have everything straightened out right after hell freezes over.]

I published a Kindle book last year, but it was just a collection of OpEd columns I had written during George W. Bush's presidency in protest of his illegal wars and his administration's arrogance and general incompetence. This was not a pleasant time. Staying informed and writing

about our government's misdeeds is not nearly as much fun as it sounds. That is why they say "Ignorance is bliss" because being "woke" is not for sissies.

Ultimately, I don't believe I accomplished anything toward stopping Bush's wars or holding him and his fellow chickenhawks responsible for anything--but I did get a lot of writing practice. It took a decade or so, but I have finally recovered from the trauma and would like to write something new.

QUOTATIONS

I love quotes. They are a distillation of wisdom and/or wit.

When it looks like things are going to Hell in a handbasket, I can always rely on this quote to put things into perspective.

The Earth is degenerating these days. Bribery and corruption abound. Children no longer mind their parents, every man wants to write a book, and it is evident that the end of the world is fast approaching.--Assyrian Stone Tablet, c.2800BC

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."--J.R.R. Tolkien

FAVORITE QUOTES:

"If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."-- Ebenezer Scrooge, *A Christmas Carol*

"The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."--Anatole France

"If the workers are organized, all they have to do is to put their hands in their pockets and they have got the capitalist class whipped."--Labor leader William "Big Bill" Haywood.

"Man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest."-- Denis Diderot (1713-1784) French Philosopher

"The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."--George Orwell, 1984

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it."-- Upton Sinclair

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it, misdiagnosing it, and then misapplying the wrong remedies."--Groucho Marx (never has this been more true)

"Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires."--John Steinbeck

“If we ever pass out as a great nation we ought to put on our tombstone, ‘America died from a delusion that she has moral leadership’.”--Will Rogers

**“The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time to plant a tree is today.”--
African Proverb**

Someone will always be prettier.

Someone will always be smarter.

Someone will always be younger.

But they will never be you.

--Freddie Mercury

**“All the ills from which America suffers can be traced to the teaching of evolution.”--
William Jennings Bryan**

**“The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer.”--Henry Kissinger,
New York Times, Oct. 28, 1973**

“It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.”--Mark Twain

**“The short memories of the American voters is what keeps our politicians in office.”--Will
Rogers**

**“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a
time when we fail to protest.”--Elie Wiesel**

**“They that can give up essential liberty for a little safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” -
Benjamin Franklin**

Quotes can become outdated. Remember when America was known as the great “melting pot” of
the world.

**“Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and
posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.”--Michel Guillaume Jean de
Crevecoeur (referring to America), (1782)**

NO longer true:

**“The American people are very generous people and will forgive almost any weakness, with
the possible exception of stupidity.”--Will Rogers**

**“Washington is not America. It has become an alien city-state that rules America, and much
of the rest of the world, in the way that Rome ruled the Roman Empire.” --Richard Maybury**

**“The issue today is the same as it has been throughout all history, whether man shall be
allowed to govern himself or be ruled by a small elite.” -- Thomas Jefferson**

“Southern trees bear strange fruit,

**Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.**
--Billie Holiday, Strange Fruit (Song title, 1938)

"The right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, both by precept and example."----R. Furman, Baptist, of South Carolina

People tell you who they are:

"Environmentalists are a socialist group of individuals that are the tool of the Democrat Party. I'm proud to say that they are my enemy. They are not Americans, never have been Americans, never will be Americans."--Rep. Don Young (R-AK), Alaska Public Radio, 08/19/96

Clueless

"You work three jobs? ...Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that."--George W. Bush, to a divorced mother of three, 2/4/05

A Libertarian Limerick

**There once was a man from Nantucket,
Who wanted to sell me a bucket,
But he could not, because,
There were too many laws,
So he threw up his hands and said, "Vote Libertarian!"**
-- Anonymous

"War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength." — George Orwell, 1984

"US Foreign Policy Is the Greatest Crime Since WWII."-- Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark

"America is at that awkward stage; it's too late to work within the system, but too early to shoot the bastards."--Claire Wolfe

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you." -Pericles (430 B.C.)

"It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong."-- Voltaire

"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."-- George Orwell

"The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed -- and thus clamorous to be led to safety -- by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary."-- H.L. Mencken

“Good intentions will always be pleaded for any assumption of power. The Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions. There are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters ... but they mean to be masters.”-- Daniel Webster

“I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”-- Alexis deTocqueville

“I must study politics and war, that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, and naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain.”-- John Adams

“If you're going to sin, sin against God, not the bureaucracy. God will forgive you but the bureaucracy won't.”-- Admiral Hyman G. Rickover

Some quotations sound wise, but are wrong:

“Love is never having to say you're sorry.”--??? Are you kidding me?

“An armed society is a polite society.”-- Robert Heinlein

“The difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets.”--Will Rogers

"As the growing emphasis on feelings crowds out reason, facts will play a smaller role in public discourse." -- Paul Craig Roberts

“You can not reason a man out of a position he didn't reason himself into in the first place.”-- Jonathan Swift

“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life.”-- Anonymous

“The Supreme Court is a constitutional convention in perpetual session.”-- Anonymous

“You need only reflect that one of the best ways to get yourself a reputation as a dangerous citizen these days is to go about repeating the very phrases which our founding fathers used in the struggle for independence.”-- Charles A. Beard

"It isn't the rebels who cause the troubles of the world. It's the troubles that cause the rebels."--Carl Oglesby, Students for a Democratic Society

"Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed."--Herman Melville, U.S. author

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”- Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize."--Tom Lehrer

"If 50 million people say a stupid thing, it's still a stupid thing."-- David Severn

"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."-- George Orwell

Some tell you everything you need to know about a person.

"I want you just to let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good...We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God to conquer this country. We don't want equal time. We don't want pluralism."--Randall Terry(quote: Arizona Republic, July 1996)

"Women have babies and men provide the support. If you don't like the way we're made you've got to take it up with God."--Phyllis Schlafly

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me. I assure you, as often as you did it for the least among you, you did it for me."--Matthew 25:35-40 (a verse that must be missing from the MAGA version of the Bible)

"A State divided into a small number of rich and a large number of poor will always develop a government manipulated by the rich to protect the amenities represented by their property." -- Harold Laski. (1930)

"Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities."--Voltaire

"Keep the company of those who seek the truth- run from those who have found it."--Vaclav Havel

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himselfand his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care. ... Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his (sic) interests."--Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

"Sincerity is the key to success. Once you can fake that you've got it made."--Groucho Marx

"I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened."--Mark Twain

"I am only one, but I am still one; I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."--Helen Keller

"Other than telling us how to live, think, marry, pray, vote, invest, educate our children and, now, die, I think the Republicans have done a fine job of getting government out of our personal lives."--Editorial Page, Sunday, June 19 Portland Oregonian

"If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake."--Mahatma Gandhi

“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”--Ancient Chinese proverb

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY (short version)

November 2, 1947: Born in Morganfield, KY

1948-1951: Lived in Norris City, IL and then Mount Carmel, IL.

Ca. 1952: Moved to Brownstown, IL and then out to William's Camp (Fayette Co., IL)

19???went to William's Camp school.

???-Started 4th grade at Brownstown Community School District

??? : William's Camp de-camped/disappeared and we moved down to the schoolhouse. that we bought from ???Broadus???

1965-Graduated from High School, started at Southern Illinois University.

1968-Married Barbara Ann Chamberlin on April 26th.

1969-Graduated from SIU with a B.S. in Zoology

1970-Drafted into the US Army on February 2nd.

1971-Tiffany Ann Youther was born September 25th at Patterson Army Hospital, W. Long Branch, NJ

1972-Discharged from US Army on February 6th; Started in grad school at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

1975-Graduated with M.S. in Zoology, Started working as Lab Assistant for Dr. Jaime Estavillo in SIU Physiology Department.

1977-Benjamin Wolfe Youther born October 1st.

(???-Worked as Stockroom manager in SIU Med. School

???-???-Worked for Dr. Yau as a Researcher in SIU Physiology Dept..

???-Joined Physiology Faculty at SIU Physiology Dept. as Laboratory Director.

2002-present-Retired

MY UNFINISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

It's not finished because I'm still alive and don't know how my story ends (and I'm in no hurry to find out). I could live another twenty years or I might drop over dead tomorrow. I can think of a lot worse ways to go than suddenly dropping over dead, but I was hoping to live long enough to see Donald Trump go to prison for trying to overthrow our government. We really need to do that—if we are to remain a nation of laws. It is too late for swift justice. All we can do is to keep demanding justice until Trump is held responsible for his crimes.

I was born on November 2, 1947 in Morganfield, KY and named for both my Grandfathers, Michael Boyd Stark and Martin Lee Yother. Both grandfathers had both worked for the Carter Oil Company in Oklahoma and were transferred to the new oil fields in Illinois around 1940.

After being discharged from the U.S. Army after WWII, Dad got a job with the Carter Oil Company where he met my Mother, Mary Laura Stark, working at the company office in St. Elmo, IL.

Check Starks birth locations
???pic of the couple

I don't know how long we lived in Morganfield, but my brother, Charles, was also born there in December of 1948. Some time after that, we moved and lived in Norris City, IL for a while before moving to Mount Carmel, IL—the first home I remember.

We lived in a rented basement apartment beneath [Carl Wesley](#)'s house located somewhere outside of Mt. Carmel. I don't remember much about the place except I think it was built of yellow and white ceramic-coated concrete block or brick. I remember looking up at the glass cover of the electric meter, where I could see the reflections of cars going by on a nearby highway. There was a little road that went right by the house, leading to a radio tower not far down the road. An older couple lived across the road, and they raised rabbits (for food?).

[**Authors note:** The recently released 1950 U.S. Census listed our address as “Swimming Pool Road”. I could not find that street on a current map, but I will continue to follow-up on that.]

All I remember about the town of Mount Carmel is Creek's Drug Store that sold comic books and some smoky little joint with a pin-ball machine. Mom had a friend named Onie? Dobbs, who had a little girl.

Part of Dad's job territory was in the Wabash River bottom, and a lot of the oil field equipment (pumps, tanks, etc...) were on raised platforms because of periodic flooding. He often used a outboard motor boat on the job, and I remember a small ferry crossing someplace. I don't think it was on the Wabash River though; it seemed too small.

When I was about 5, Dad got a transfer to a position in the Brownstown/St. Elmo area (the Loudon Pool—the oil field area) where both my Grandfathers worked. We lived in Brownstown for a short time, renting a house from Miss Rhody, owner and operator of the drugstore in Brownstown (the place to buy comic books). The other main attractions to a 5 year old in Brownstown were Huddleston's Grocery Store, Mr. Fritz's Barber shop, Hancock Feed, and Alan Wirz's hardware store.

The Huddlestons, [Bill](#) and Sylvia, were also Oklahoma transplants. Mr. Huddleston was at least part native American and acted as the butcher in the store. Mrs. Huddleston ran the cash register. They were both very nice to the kids.

We did not live in Brownstown very long, but moved to our own house in William's Camp, an oil-field community about 5 miles south of Route 40 between Brownstown and St. Elmo. Map???

I like to say that I grew up in a little part of Oklahoma. It just happened that this little part of Oklahoma was in South Central Illinois. See Appendix.

There were three Carter Oil camps in the area: the William's Camp, the Fortner Camp and the Altamont Camp. They were created by the oil company because there was not enough housing for all the new oil field workers moving into the area.

HIGH SCHOOL

Baseball

Teachers

Sue Harris

Typing class

Track

Baseball was a big part of my adolescent life. The family story goes that Granddad Youther (Martin Lee Youther) had been hired by Carter Oil in Oklahoma because of his baseball pitching ability. My Dad also played on a Carter Oil team at one time.

I worked in the oil field for Exxon during the summers of 1965 and 1966 and was well on my way to becoming a third generation oil field worker, but my folks convinced me to start college in the fall of 1965. I believe now, that it was because the war in Vietnam was heating up, and my Dad did not want me to be in it.

Even though I ended up being drafted after graduating from college, I did not go to Vietnam. I fought the battle of New Jersey, and to the best of my knowledge--no Viet Cong got past me all the time I was there.

I started at Southern Illinois University (SIU) in the fall of 1965. I originally planned to study accounting and be a highly paid CPA, but one semester of statistics cured me of that notion. I eventually majored in Zoology and minored in Botany. Dad would often ask me, "Son, what do a zoologist do?"

After graduating in 1969, I discovered a zoologist couldn't do much of anything if he was classified 1-A by the Selective Service System.

I tested for positions with Civil Service jobs with the state of Illinois. I never heard of a single position available. Got one interview with an ecological consulting firm in St. Louis, where I got a nice lunch but no job.

I finally got a job as a grill cook at the Family Fun Restaurant in Carbondale. Bob Hogge was the manager.

Working as a grill cook sucked. That is about all you can say about it. It was hot, greasy and paid very little. The only good times I remember from that period was getting off work and going to the beach at Crab Orchard Lake with Barb, George and Pat Soltwedel.

I could not get into the graduate program in the Zoology Department because of my poor undergraduate grade(s) in chemistry, so I started out as a graduate student in the Biological Sciences program. I worked as a teaching assistant in introductory biology labs while I took courses to prove that I could pass the necessary chemistry courses needed to get into the Zoology Department.

After making good grades in a couple of semesters of organic chemistry, I was accepted into the Zoology graduate program. I worked for a while as a research assistant in the Cooperative Wildlife lab—trapping and marking deer on the Horseshoe Island refuge in Alexander County, IL, processing samples taken at deer-check stations during deer season and conducting a botanical study of what deer were eating on the refuge.

After graduating with my Masters of Science degree in Zoology, I got a job as a Lab Assistant for Dr. Jaime Estavillo in the Physiology Department—studying respiratory physiology.

After Dr. Estavillo's 3-year grant ran out, I got a job as Stockroom Manager in the School of Medicine at SIU. I was in that position for 3-4 years before I got a researcher position in Dr. William Yau's job. I was there for 17 years, until I retired.

I've been retired now for almost twenty years, and I plan on living and drawing my pension long enough to make up for the poor pay from working at SIU.

My first year in college was kind of strange. I lived with my Uncle Bill's mother-in-law, Eleanor Hastie in Carterville, IL. She was a nice old lady, but I spent most of my "free" time out at SIU's Vocational Technical Institute (VTI), visiting with my hometown buddy, Alan Dycus, and playing cards with him and some of his dorm-mates.

We mostly played a card game called "Guts", which I cannot remember how to play now.

My sophomore year was a lot of fun. I lived in Elkhaville, IL, about 13 miles north of Carbondale. A high school classmate's mother bought a house there for her son to live while attending SIU. I moved in with him and a couple of guys from St. Elmo (Bob H. and Ronny N.). We got to know a lot of locals from Elkhaville, Vergennes, Dowell and Duquoin and became a part of the community—we were the college guys that lived on Third? Street.

One day, the siren at the Fire Station sounded, summoning members of the Elkhville Volunteer Fire Department. The fire station was only a block and a half away, so we ran down to see if we could help. That is when we discovered that we were the Elkhville Volunteer Fire Department. Besides us, there was only Mr. Halliday, grocery store owner and Fire Chief, and a heavy-set man who drove the fire truck (He didn't get out of the truck).

We went to two fires that day. The first one was on old shack burning. We just let it burn out, making sure it didn't spread. The second was a grass fire threatening some kind of radio tower. We beat it out with shovels and sprayed the area down to make sure. That was the sum total of our fire fighting experiences, but Mr. Halliday appreciated our help and invited us to go with him to Black Diamond volunteer firefighter's banquet. I won a fifth of whiskey in a door prize drawing, and a good time was had by all.

I also think of that year as "My Year of Living Dangerously"--having bought a motorcycle from Lester Van Zandes??? [[[more on that]]]

PANDEMIC

I recall thinking early-on that we should deliberately contract the virus before the hospital ran out of respirators, but sanity prevailed and we decided to follow governmental guidelines instead. We wore our masks and stayed out of public as much as possible. We got vaccines and booster shots when they became available and have thus far avoided the virus.

Right now, they are pulling all the levers of power to get you back to work. They don't care that an epidemic continues to spread throughout the country. They need you working because the money machine doesn't work without you. The Epidemic laid bare who was really essential to society--especially in hard times. It is not the billionaires. It is you.

[To be Continued]